

Message Text

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71

ACTION EB-11

INFO OCT-01 ARA-16 ISO-00 CAB-09 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 FAA-00 SCEM-02 SS-20 TRSE-00

INT-08 NEA-10 AF-10 DRC-01 /099 W

----- 123491

R 131710Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9313

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 6713

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ENRG, ETRN, PN

SUBJECT: CIVIL AVIATION-AIR PANAMA'S REQUEST TO U.S. AIRLINES
FOR ASSISTANCE IN SOLVING FUEL PROBLEM

REF: STATE 240379; PANAMA 6581 AND 6659

SUMMARY: PAN AM AND BRANIFF HAVE NOT PROVIDED ASSISTANCE TO AIR PANAMA

AND BOTH HAVE CUT BACK IN FLIGHTS FROM PANAMA. BRANIFF VICE-PRESIDENT MENTIONED CONVERSATION WITH PANAMANIAN PRESIDENT LAKAS WHO SAID ALGERIA HAD PROMISED TO SUPPLY PANAMA WITH CRUDE AND PERU HAD PROMISED JET FUEL. HE SUGGESTED AIR PANAMA COULD THEN OBTAIN EXTRA SUPPLY OF JET FUEL LOCALLY AND SHIP IT TO MIAMI FOR STROAGE AND USE IN EVENT OF SHORTFALL IN AVAILABILITY THERE. END SUMMARY.

1. BOTH PAN AM AND BRANIFF DENY THAT THEY HAVE PROVIDED ASSISTANCE TO AIR PANAMA. THEY BOTH CITE RECENT CUTBACKS IN SCHEDULING AND, IF PROBLEM GROWS WORSE, WOULD HAVE TO MAKE FURHTER CUTS IN SERVICE. IN OCTOBER, PAN AM REPLACED JUMBO JET 747 SERVICE TO MIAMI WITH 707 (APPROXIMATELY HALF CAPACITY OF 747) AND HAS SINCE ABANDONED ORIGINAL PLAN TO SCHEDULE ADDITIONAL DAILY 707 FLIGHT TO MAKE UP FOR LOSS IN CAPACITY. BRANIFF HAS SUSPENDED 7 (OUT OF PREVIOUS 68 PER WEEK) OF ITS FLIGHTS SINCE SHELL NOTICE THAT FUEL SUPPLIES WOULD BE REDUCED BY UP TO 10 PERCENT.

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2. BRANIFF REGIONAL VICE PRESIDENT WAS UNSYMPATHETIC TO AIR PANAMA'S

COMPLAINT. HE DESCRIBED SOME OF HIS EFFORTS TO OBTAIN FUEL IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES AND TO RENT STORAGE FACILITIES IN PANAMA AND MIAMI. FOR EXAMPLE HE MENTIONED ATTEMPTS TO ARRANGE FUEL SHIPMENTS FROM COLOMBIA TO MIAMI FOR USE BY AVIANCA AND BRANIFF, AND SUGGESTED THAT AIR PANAMA SHOULD BE EMPLOYING SIMILAR INGENUITY TO RESOLVE PROBLEM.

3. BRANIFF VICE-PRESIDENT TOLD EMBOFF IN CONFIDENCE THAT PANAMANIAN PRESIDENT LAKAS HAD SAID THAT PANAMANIAN DELEGATIONS ARE NOW IN PERU ARRANGING TO PURCHASE JET FUEL AND IN ALGERIA TO OBTAIN CRUDE FOR LOCAL REFINERY. HE ADDED THAT CHIEFS OF STATE OF BOTH COUNTRIES HAD ALREADY PROMISED TO MAKE SUPPLIES AVAILABLE TO PANAMA. HE SUGGESTED THAT, IF PRESIDENT LAKAS' STATEMENT TRUE, AIR PANAMA COULD ARRANGE TO BY JET FUEL IN PANAMA AND SHIP TO MIAMI TO COVER ANY SHORTFALL IN AVAILABILITIES THERE.
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